

**HOMILY ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF THE STATUE  
OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA  
TO ST. DAVID'S CATHEDRAL  
6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2017  
ARCHBISHOP GEORGE STACK**

When you enter a Catholic church you are immediately surrounded by signs, symbols and sacraments, which speak to us in a wordless language of the deep truths of our faith. So much of what we believe about God, or more importantly what God believes about us, cannot be put into words. It is too deep for words, goes beyond words.

Today, on this first Saturday of the month of Mary, the symbols and statues and pictures around us speak about her unique role in the unfolding of the history of salvation. The Pieta in the chapel on your right, a copy of the famous Michelangelo statue in Rome. Our Lady of Sorrows. Nearby is a replica of the ancient statue at the shrine of Our Lady of Penrhys. This is the 13<sup>th</sup> century medieval shrine in this Diocese, which belonged to the Cistercian monks at Llantarnam. It reminds us of the contemplative nature of Mary. "She stored these things up in her heart". As you leave

the Cathedral, look at the great west window above you; a glorious presentation and tribute to our belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The new Eve, reversing the sin of Adam, untouched by original Sin, never separated from God in her life, united with God at the moment of her death in what we call her Assumption, a sign and symbol of everything we could have been, all that we are, and all that we hope to be when we experience the vision of God in heaven.

In this centenary year of the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima, we have the unique representation of that appearance in the statue which has been brought into our midst. Who would have thought that one hundred years after her appearance, we are still facing the turmoil foretold in those apparitions, not least with the actions of Russia in the Ukraine and in Syria, the apparent undermining of democracy in American and French elections and the danger of nuclear catastrophe in North Korea?

There is another symbol to which I would like to draw your attention during this Mass. It is intimately associated with our devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. And that is the statue of St. John Paul II. You will see it on the opposite side of the sanctuary to the statue of "Nossa Senhora de Fatima". The relic of the bullet which almost killed him is in her crown. And

I am privileged to be wearing the vestment which he wore when he celebrated Mass here in Cardiff in 1982, another tangible connection with that great Pope and Saint.

When faced with the enormous and apparently insoluble dilemmas of our world, the danger is for every person, believer and non believer alike, to feel powerless and helpless, passive in the face of such huge forces of hostility and alienation, of criticism and secularism, so many of which seek to undermine the dignity of the human person and the spiritual dimension of human life and love.

Our devotion to Our Lady of Fatima helps us to resist that fatalism. Her words at the Wedding Feast of Cana ring down through the ages. "Do whatever he tells you". We need to listen to the worldless actions of Mary and conform ourselves to the pattern of her faithfulness to the word of God. That is why we name her "the highest honour of our race". This for me is the key to the rosary which lies at the heart of so much of our devotion. It was Pope Paul VI who described the rosary as the best form of meditation on the scriptures. This prayer, and the action it inspires, takes us to the heart of the living sign that Mary is to all of us on our journey of faith. The Immaculate Heart of Mary beats with a mother's love for all those who seek to do the will of God as revealed in and through her Son Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict XVI put it well

when he wrote *“In biblical language, the “heart” indicates the centre of human life, the point where reason, will temperament and sensitivity converge”*. Devotion to Mary our way of saying “yes” to an attitude of heart and mind, of will and action which conforms to the way of sacrificial love shown us by Jesus on the cross.

Let me finish with intercessions from the Litany of Our Lady of Walsingham which can unite her children in this country to those who will gather in Fatima to mark the centenary:

Woman of Hope	Keep us in mind
Woman who listened	Remember us to God
Mother of God	Be our Mother always

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